



# United States Congress

*U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **ISRAEL AND BISHOP WELCOME SUFFOLK FIRE CHIEFS TO U.S. CAPITOL** *Congressmen Vow to Support Chiefs' Legislative Agenda to Improve Safety and Funding*

Washington, DC - On Thursday, Representatives Tim Bishop and Steve Israel hosted a breakfast meeting in Washington, DC for Suffolk County's Fire Chiefs. The chiefs traveled to the nation's capital this week for their annual meeting to discuss issues of importance to firefighters and residents. The chiefs were seeking increased support for specific fire prevention and safety programs for both firefighters and Suffolk County residents.

"Suffolk County residents should be reassured and extremely proud of their fire departments and volunteers," Bishop said. "Those who volunteer as first responders need our full support to keep our communities safe." Bishop has helped secure more than \$1 million of federal funding for local fire departments through the Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. "Continuing to fully fund our first responders is vital to protecting our homeland security."

"Firefighters are vital to America's first response team and contribute greatly to our homeland security and those on Long Island are no exception," said Israel, who was recently appointed Chair of the Democratic Taskforce on Defense and the Military. "Making sure our firehouses are fully staffed and supported is critical. We can't shortchange our brave volunteers who give up so much to protect us."

The chiefs requested Bishop and Israel to support The Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act, HR 1131. That bill will provide a tax incentive to property owners who are financially unable to upgrade fire prevention methods in older buildings. Many state and local governments do not mandate automatic sprinklers for properties built prior to the establishment of the more modern fire codes. This legislation provides incentives for the voluntary installation of automated sprinkler systems. Both Israel and Bishop agreed to cosponsor The Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act.

Both Bishop and Israel also announced that they have become original cosponsors of the Support Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Service Crews Act of 2005, or SERVE Act. The SERVE Act will grant a \$1000 tax credit to active members of volunteer fire departments and emergency medical service organizations. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, more than 70 percent of firefighters across America are volunteers. Supporters of this legislation believe that this will aid in recruitment and retention of new volunteers.

The following fire departments and fire organizations visited Washington, DC and met with their respective Representative: Selden F.D., Suffolk County Chiefs Executive Committee, Smithtown Township Chiefs, Middle Island F.D., Port Jefferson F.D., Hauppauge F.D., Islip Town Chiefs, Babylon Chiefs, Freeport F.D., Merrick F.D., Quogue F.D. Vice President New York State Chiefs, Levittown F.D. Vice President FASNY, East Northport F.D. President Suffolk County Volunteer Association, Sayville President FASNY, Southampton F.D., Northport F.D., Alberston F.D., Hauppauge CFSI Representative, Representatives of FASNY, Fire News Staff, Mechanics Association of L.I., and Fire Insurance Group L.I.

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